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Trafficking in women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/167, the present report contains information on successful interventions and strategies, as well as gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based and gender- and age-sensitive approaches within comprehensive and balanced efforts to address trafficking in persons.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/167, on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly urged Governments to devise, enforce and strengthen effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and girls. The Assembly called upon Governments to, inter alia, address the factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to being trafficked; criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons; strengthen prevention and awareness-raising action; support and protect victims of trafficking; encourage the media and business sectors to cooperate in efforts to eliminate trafficking; and enhance information-sharing and data-collection capacity.

2. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-third session a report that compiled information on successful interventions and strategies, as well as the gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and provided recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approaches within comprehensive and balanced efforts to address trafficking in persons. The present report is based on, inter alia, information received from Member States, entities of the United Nations system and other organizations. It covers the period since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/71/223), from 26 July 2016 to 30 June 2018. It takes into account emerging issues such as the impact of technological advances on the trafficking of women and girls.

II. Global and regional normative developments

3. Trafficking in persons has been recognized by Member States both as a human rights violation and as a critical issue for development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains specific targets in the Sustainable Development Goals that address trafficking, as a part of the continuum of violence against women and girls, in particular target 5.2 of the Goals, on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, target 8.7, on eradicating forced labour and ending modern slavery and human trafficking, and target 16.2, on ending all abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence.

4. Important features of the 2030 Agenda that are particularly important for eliminating trafficking are the Agenda's being grounded in human rights principles and standards; its universal application to all people in all countries; the commitment to leaving no one behind, including the most vulnerable; and the emphasis on the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in its implementation. As such, in the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed to ensuring that all women and girls, regardless of their location, situation or circumstances, live a life free from violence, including trafficking.

5. In addition to the 2030 Agenda, global norms and standards on the elimination of trafficking have been advanced by several United Nations bodies during the reporting period. The General Assembly held a high-level meeting in September 2017 to appraise progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and, by its resolution 72/1, adopted the political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in which Member States reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the Global Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on addressing the complex factors that contribute to the trafficking of women and girls. In line with the

commitment to leave no one behind, Member States reiterated the need for improved collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors.

6. In the agreed conclusions adopted at its sixty-first and sixty-second sessions, the Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments to strengthen anti-trafficking strategies that integrate a human rights and sustainable development perspective and address the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and forced labour. At its sixty-second session, reflecting the commitment to leave no one behind, the Commission recognized that women and girls in rural and remote areas might be particularly vulnerable to violence.

7. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, continued to examine the impact of anti-trafficking measures on the human rights of victims. The Special Rapporteur drew attention to protecting victims of trafficking and people at risk of trafficking in conflict and post-conflict situations, especially women and children (see A/71/303) and to protecting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (see A/HRC/38/45). In 2017, the Special Rapporteur prepared a joint report with the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (A/72/164), in which they studied the vulnerabilities of children to sale, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation in situations of conflict and humanitarian crisis.

8. In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, transmitted a report to the General Assembly (A/72/139), in which she assessed how the continued prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery was related to sustainable development, emphasizing gender inequality and inequalities more broadly as key drivers of slavery. In 2018, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, highlighted how technology can be used for trafficking in women and girls and as a threat to compel women into trafficking situations (see A/HRC/38/47). The Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict also addressed trafficking in her 2016 report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/34/44).

9. In 2016, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 32/3 on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in which it placed a specific focus on conflict and post-conflict situations. In its resolution 33/7, on unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights, the Council expressed concern about migrant children and adolescents in vulnerable situations, in particular with regard to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

10. In its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, adopted at its sixty-ninth session, held from 19 February to 9 March 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that States parties develop policies and programmes to address existing and new risk factors for gender-based violence against women, human trafficking and forced marriage, recognizing the continuum of violence experienced by women and girls in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change. At the same session, the Committee decided to elaborate a general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.

11. The links between trafficking, conflict and insecurity were addressed in Security Council resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017), in which the Council condemned all acts of trafficking. Recognizing the continuum of violence against women and girls, the Council stressed that acts of human trafficking during armed conflict, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, could be part of the strategic objectives and ideologies of certain terrorist groups. It recommended that Member States investigate, disrupt and dismantle the networks involved, emphasizing international cooperation

in law enforcement. In his report to the Council (S/2017/939), the Secretary-General expressed particular concern about the exploitation of women and girls by terrorist groups, including the armed group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram, in particular where women and girls are forced into marriage and offered as a reward to fighters and associates. The Panel of Experts on Yemen also highlighted the problem of trafficking in their 2017 report (S/2017/81/Corr.1 and S/2018/193).

III. Current context

A. Trafficking as a gendered global challenge

12. Trafficking remains a global challenge; the most reliable estimates available from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicate that, between 2012 and 2014, a total of 63,251 victims were detected in over 100 countries.[1] Western and Southern Europe and high-income countries of the Middle East and North America are key destination areas for trafficking. The most significant trafficking flows originate from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South America and South Asia, whereas flows from sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia are more globally dispersed.[2] The majority of victims are trafficked transnationally (57 per cent), with the remainder trafficked domestically, a share which has increased from 34 per cent in 2010 to 43 per cent in 2014,[3] which is in part reflective of improved data collection efforts in many destination countries.

13. Over the past decade, the profile of victims of trafficking has changed: although most detected victims are still women, children and men are now making up a larger share compared with a decade ago. In 2014, women made up 51 per cent of detected victims of trafficking, compared with 74 per cent in 2004. Men made up 21 per cent of detected victims in 2014, compared with 13 per cent in 2004. The reason for the increasing share of men is attributed to the increasing recognition and detection of different forms of trafficking, including trafficking for forced labour, for which men are more likely to be trafficked. Preliminary data for 2016 indicates that the share of women as detected victims of trafficking remains at similar levels to 2014, whereas there has been a slight increase in the share of girls between 2014 and 2016.[4]

14. In most areas of the world, the information on detected victims shows that trafficking in persons mainly affects women and girls. Preliminary data for the 2014–2016 period indicates that 82 per cent of detected women are trafficked for sexual exploitation, 13 per cent for forced labour and the remainder for other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriages or begging. Some 71 per cent of detected girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation, 22 per cent for forced labour and 7 per cent for other forms of exploitation.[5] In some regions, such as East Asia, women are more likely than men to be victims of forced labour. In that context, women are often trafficked for the purpose of domestic servitude in family households.[6]

15. Trafficking for various types of marriage is emerging as a more prevalent form, as identified by UNODC in its 2016 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

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[1] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IV.6).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18._____).

[5] Ibid.

[6] See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2016).

UNODC is currently developing a paper in which it will provide analytical and conceptual context on the issue of trafficking in persons for or with an aspect of marriage. In some regions, this often involves forced marriages, or unions without the consent of the woman or girl. Trafficking for sham marriages mainly takes place in higher income countries.[7] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports a growing trend of women in the Greater Mekong subregion being deceived and/or coerced into marriages to men in the region.[8]

16. The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, launched in 2017 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with Polaris Project and Liberty Asia, has identified a number of other differences in victims of trafficking based on gender and age. For example, there is a higher percentage of women in younger age groups, whereas men tend to have a larger share in the over-30 age groups. Almost half of male victims were recruited by an acquaintance, whereas over a quarter of female victims were recruited by an intimate partner, and over a third by a family member or relative. Looking at the means of control, restriction of movement, and psychological and sexual abuse are used as a means of control over female victims of trafficking more than male victims.[9]

B. Links between trafficking, gender inequality and the Sustainable Development Goals

17. Many of the root causes and underlying factors for the trafficking of women and girls are covered in the Sustainable Development Goals. They include gender-specific factors such as: the acceptance and normalization of violence against women and girls, which is addressed in Goals 5, 11 and 16; the vulnerability of women to poverty, addressed in Goal 1; the concentration of women in insecure and vulnerable work and their lack of decent work opportunities, addressed in Goal 8; and the limited access for women and girls to education, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4. Broader socioeconomic factors also play a role, such as inequalities within and between countries, which is addressed in Goal 10, and insecurity as a result of conflict, addressed in Goal 16, or as a result of climate change and natural disasters, which is addressed in Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15. As such, the implementation of several Goals is critical to the elimination of trafficking in women and girls.

18. The trafficking of women and girls is a form of violence against women, and as such, responses to trafficking must be connected to the broader targets of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (Goals 5, 11 and 16). Understanding violence against women and girls, including trafficking, as a continuum is to recognize the commonalities and connections between manifestations of violence in diverse contexts, in particular the gendered norms, assumptions and stereotypes around male domination, sexual entitlement, coercion and control.[10] Dominant norms and stereotypes regarding masculinities create an expectation of men to exert power to control and coerce women, in particular in relation to sex. Furthermore, norms and gender stereotypes around the expectation of submissiveness and gender roles of women also create a

[7] Ibid.

[8] United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia: A Study on Forced Marriage between Cambodia and China*, (Bangkok, UNDP, 2016).

[9] Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, "Human trafficking and gender: differences, similarities and trends". Available at www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends.

[10] Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988).

context conducive to violence against women, including trafficking. Efforts to prevent trafficking must address such norms and gender stereotypes.

19. The vulnerability to trafficking experienced by women and girls is closely connected to their unequal economic and social status, which is addressed in Sustainable Development Goals 1, 4, 5 and 8. Globally, women and girls are overrepresented among the poor: 330 million women and girls live on less than $1.90 per day, which amounts to 4.4 million more women than men.[11] Women in developing countries remain concentrated in the most vulnerable forms of informal work.[12] Poverty and the inability to gain access to decent work may push women to seek risky economic opportunities where they are at risk of coercion, abuse and trafficking. Efforts to flee situations of violence and abuse also prompt women and girls to take risks that may lead to them being trafficked.

20. Gender disparities in education can also increase the risk of trafficking among women and girls. Although the gender gap in rates of primary and secondary school enrolment have decreased overall, in some regions, girls remain more likely than boys to be out of school. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, 35.1 per cent of female children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels of education are out of school, compared with 29.6 per cent of males. A lack of education increases the risk of trafficking among women and girls by limiting their future economic options. Being out of school also increases the risk of trafficking for girls, given that they are often forced or coerced into vulnerable and exploitative forms of work to support themselves or their families.[13] Education plays an important role not only in preventing trafficking by expanding economic opportunities for women and girls, but also in providing an opportunity for educating and raising awareness about trafficking among all pupils.

21. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can make some groups of women more vulnerable to trafficking. As noted in the recent report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, evidence has shown that certain groups of women in all parts of the world experience significantly greater socioeconomic disadvantages on the basis of their racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and social identities and prejudices. The commitment to leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is therefore particularly important for the elimination of trafficking in women and girls.

22. Broader socioeconomic factors, addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals, can also play a role in the trafficking of women and girls. Progress in reducing inequality within and among countries, addressed in Goal 10, has been mixed, with income inequality increasing in countries with negative growth.[14] Where inequalities are growing, such factors push the poorest, in particular women, to find better economic opportunities in wealthier countries, thus increasing their vulnerability to

[11] UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United States, UN-Women, 2018).

[12] International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 — Global snapshot* (Geneva, ILO, 2018).

[13] United Nations Children's Fund, "Reversing the trend: child trafficking in East and Southeast Asia", 2009.

[14] United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.I.7).

trafficking.[15] In addition, global inequalities between countries mean that low-income countries have fewer resources for sustainable development or to invest in services and infrastructure that can help to lift people out of poverty, thus further contributing to the trafficking of women and girls.

23. Conflict and insecurity, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 16, also increases vulnerability to trafficking among women and girls. Although reliable data disaggregated by sex and age are difficult to collect in the context of a refugee crisis, an estimated 49 per cent of refugees were women and girls in 2016.[16] Women and girls who are forcibly displaced experience a heightened risk of trafficking, as well as other forms of violence against women, and often lack access to adequate health and other services. Migrants in transit are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for various forms of exploitation, including labour exploitation in various sectors, as well as sexual exploitation (see A/HRC/31/35). Climate change and environmental degradation, addressed in Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15, increase the risk of natural disasters and place a strain on livelihoods. In those contexts, economic instability and insecurity increases the risk of trafficking for women and girls, in particular in situations where women and girls become separated from their families, or where families resort to trafficking or collude with traffickers, in their desperation to earn an income.[17]

24. Policy and regulatory contexts can also exacerbate vulnerabilities to trafficking for women and girls. Migration policies and management, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 10, including the detention of adults and children with irregular migration status, the temporary placement and return of unaccompanied migrant children and the temporary, non-immigrant visas tying migrants to single employers, create vulnerabilities to trafficking, as people pursue risky options in order to migrate. The lack of sufficient accessible, legal pathways for migration, especially for low-skilled employment where migrant women tend to be concentrated, and restrictive immigration schemes by migrant-receiving countries, also increase the risks of trafficking. Although restrictive migration policies are often introduced in an effort to prevent trafficking, the lack of viable options for people to migrate for economic opportunities in fact increases the risk of trafficking. Furthermore, insufficient labour protections can also create a favourable environment for traffickers.

25. The role of prevention in addressing trafficking is vital, and efforts in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals should include measures that adequately respond to the complex causes of trafficking, such as gendered poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities and limited access to education. To achieve those ends, such measures should expand beyond awareness-raising and education to address the root causes, as well as the demand, that leads to the exploitation of women and girls and trafficking.

C. Technological advances and the prevention and response to trafficking in women and girls

26. In recent decades, rapidly expanding technological advances have changed the way the world and people are connected. Access to information and communications

[15] Gergana Danailova-Trainor and Patrick Belser, *Globalization and the illicit market for human trafficking: an empirical analysis of supply and demand* (Geneva, ILO, 2006); Cassandra E. DiRienzo, and Jayoti Das, "Income distribution and human trafficking outflows", *Review of European Studies*, vol. 10, No. 2 (2018).

[16] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: forced displacement in 2017", (June 2018).

[17] IOM, "The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus" (Bangkok, IOM, 2016).

technology continues to grow worldwide, albeit unevenly and with gender disparities, and new technologies and services are continually emerging, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data and blockchain technologies, among many others. although there is limited research available, the emerging literature and practice suggest that these advances present both challenges and opportunities for the prevention of and response to trafficking.

27. Technology today plays a role in facilitating each part of the trafficking chain.[18] For example, technology can play a role in recruiting victims, as social media and Internet sites can be used to identify, groom and coerce potential victims of trafficking. From a gender perspective, traffickers can use sexualized images of women and girls as a tactic of control and coercion. Social media and the Internet are used by traffickers to deceive women and girls into sexual exploitation and sham marriages on the false promise of other forms of work. Offenders may use the Internet to advertise and sell victims, and partnerships and crime syndicates that facilitate trafficking can also be formed with the support of technological advances.[19]

28. The ability to trace activities on the Internet through technological advances can also help authorities to identify and locate potentially vulnerable women and girls who may be victimized and track activities of offenders by following their credit card transactions, GPS location and travel.[20] Technology can also support authorities in the collection and analysis of data, leading to the prosecution of traffickers, and in streamlining communication between anti-trafficking actors. The capacity to reach mass audiences through the Internet and social media creates opportunities for greater awareness-raising to enable communities to help detect trafficking and reach potential victims and survivors of trafficking with information about their rights, services and support.

29. Globally, women and girls are less likely to have access to means of personal identification than men, due to economic and social barriers, placing them at greater risk of trafficking, given that they cannot travel through legal channels or prove their age, nationality or citizenship or immigration status. New technologies such as those facilitating data mining can help to detect and identify women and girls who are trafficked and make it more difficult for trafficking offenders to create fake identities. Digital identity innovations such as technology using a distributed digital ledger, known as a "blockchain", can also play a role in preventing trafficking, identifying victims and helping them to rebuild their lives. Blockchain technology could enable Governments to digitally issue or digitize existing paper identity documents, and such solutions could be used to improve access to and securely store documentation, which would improve access to identity documents for women and girls. Some countries are increasingly utilizing blockchain technology for national identification systems; however, it is important to ensure that such strategies respect privacy laws and ensure data protection.

[18] Sofija Voronova and Anja Radjenovic, "The gender dimension of human trafficking", European Parliament briefing (February 2016).

[19] Danah Boyd and others, "Human Trafficking and Technology: A framework for understanding the role of technology in the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S.", paper prepared for Microsoft Research Connections, 2011.

[20] Ibid.

IV. Actions taken by Member States and the United Nations system

30. The following section outlines the measures taken by Member States[21] and the United Nations system[22] to address trafficking in women and girls during the reporting period, with a focus on addressing gender inequalities, leaving no one behind and the role of technology.

A. Enabling environment and accountability

31. Effective prevention of and response to trafficking in women and girls requires a taking a comprehensive approach to the elimination of violence against women and girls, supported by adequate financial resources. The recently launched European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative,[23] supported by European Union investments amounting to €500 million, galvanizes such a comprehensive approach and encompasses measures in the areas of laws and policies, prevention, services and data collection to address violence against women and girls, including trafficking. The initiative ensures that women and girls that face intersecting forms of discrimination are at the core of the interventions it supports.

32. States obligations under international law, and the guidelines contained therein with respect to the adoption of anti-trafficking laws and policies, can help States to create an enabling environment for the promotion of anti-trafficking efforts. Furthermore, the degree of adherence of States to relevant treaties is indicative of their commitment to action. In that regard, by 2016, 158 countries had a statute in place that criminalized most forms of trafficking in persons, in line with the United Nations definition.[24] During the reporting period, several countries enacted new laws, or strengthened existing laws, to criminalize trafficking, including the reform of criminal or penal law (Germany, Ireland, Mali, Rwanda and Tunisia). Other legal reforms or decisions have elaborated the obligations and responsibilities with respect to the implementation of national action plans on trafficking (Austria), the assistance and protection of victims of trafficking (Croatia), the regulation and inspection of businesses suspected of trafficking (Republic of Korea), specific forms of trafficking such as for sham marriages (Latvia), sexual exploitation (Lebanon) and restitution orders (Jamaica).

33. States have also reformed laws and regulations in areas that are important for the elimination of trafficking in women and girls and the commitment to leave no one behind, such as migrant labour conditions (Barbados), human mobility (Ecuador), the rights of migrant workers (Indonesia) and the rights of domestic workers (Qatar and United Arab Emirates).

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[21] Submissions received from the following 53 Member States: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cabo Verde, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eswatini, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

[22] Submissions received from the following United Nations entities: IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, UNODC, UN-Women and World Health Organization (WHO).

[23] See www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/index.shtml.

[24] See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2016).

34. Where anti-trafficking laws and measures do exist, low conviction rates create a culture of impunity, which acts as an enabling factor for trafficking offenders. Rates of investigations, prosecutions and convictions remain very low, with a high rate of attrition throughout the criminal justice process. An average of only 26 per cent of investigated cases ended with first-instance court convictions in the period 2012–2014.[25] A UNODC analysis shows that conviction rates are likely to increase, the longer that laws are in place, and the poor outcomes throughout the criminal justice process indicate that more effort is needed to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and justice institutions and increase access for women to justice.

35. To address these factors, building the capacity of the justice system to effectively and sensitively respond to the needs of victims of trafficking, including through the development of new training modules and protocols, has been the main focus of Member States for increasing access to justice for survivors of trafficking (Austria, El Salvador and Kyrgyzstan). In many cases, training for law enforcement agencies has been developed and delivered in collaboration with civil society partners with specialist expertise in addressing trafficking from a gender perspective.

36. Recognizing the need for more concerted and long-term action, countries have also continued to develop and revise multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder national action plans to set out priorities, responsibilities, time frames and monitoring frameworks in ways that address the gendered nature of trafficking (Cambodia, Cabo Verde, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Switzerland). Multi-stakeholder approaches improve outcomes for victims of trafficking by strengthening referral pathways and improving their access to the services they need. Some countries have also addressed trafficking through strategies to end all forms of violence against women and girls, where trafficking is seen as being on a continuum with other forms and manifestations of such violence (Cambodia and Greece). To strengthen internal accountability for implementing such plans, countries have established interministerial taskforces, committees and commissions with mandates to oversee action plans on trafficking and regularly report on outcomes (Austria, Cambodia, Denmark, Haiti, Honduras, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Nigeria, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)).

37. The United Nations system has supported the work of Member States in developing laws and improving law enforcement and criminal justice responses. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNODC and UN-Women have contributed to legal reform processes in a number of countries aimed at introducing or strengthening laws to address trafficking, have provided capacity-building to the justice sector aimed at improving access to justice for survivors and have trained prosecutors on matters relating to trafficking. A joint initiative of the European Union, IOM, UNICEF and UNODC across 13 countries has focused on understanding children's experiences of the criminal justice system in relation to trafficking cases. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is providing anti-trafficking capacity-building to law enforcement in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali and Somalia (see S/2017/939). At the regional level, UN-Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and IOM coordinated the advocacy efforts leading to the adoption of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) declaration on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers.

38. The United Nations system continues to coordinate interventions to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and to protect and support victims of trafficking, in particular through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which published a policy brief on the gender dimensions of trafficking in

[25] Ibid.

2017, and, in its first principals-level meeting in May 2018, took steps to ensure a system-wide survivor-centred response to ending human trafficking, including its links to migrant flows and forced labour. At the regional level, UNDP manages the United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons project, which facilitates a coordinated and collaborative effort against human trafficking in the Greater Mekong subregion.

B. Addressing root causes, including through technology

39. Although the majority of actions are focused on the criminal justice response to trafficking, or on providing protection and support services to victims, there has been increasing recognition that more efforts are needed in the prevention of trafficking. Prevention strategies are still very much limited to education, training and outreach programmes focused on improving knowledge and raising awareness of trafficking.

40. Raising awareness of trafficking through public information and the media can increase knowledge about the risk factors for trafficking and the contexts in which it may occur. Families and communities in particular can play a key role in prevention by understanding and responding to risk factors and identifying potential victims. Countries have held workshops, disseminated public information through print and web media, including through creative approaches such as theatre and national days of recognition, to build understanding about trafficking (Argentina, Azerbaijan Cambodia, Eswatini, Greece, Haiti, Jamaica, Latvia, Lithuania, Peru, Romania and Sierra Leone). Some countries have targeted specific groups as part of their campaigns and outreach efforts, including migrant workers (Austria), high-risk communities (Colombia), young people (Hungary) and the most disadvantaged communities (Mauritania), in order to contribute to leaving no one behind in the prevention of trafficking. Efforts of Cameroon to raise awareness have focused on families, in recognition of the fact that families can often play a role in facilitating trafficking.

41. United Nations entities and regional organizations have also implemented prevention and awareness-raising initiatives. UNODC has continued to expand global awareness through the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, recently focusing on the aviation and hospitality sectors. UN-Women has focused on preventing trafficking as a form of violence against women and girls by focusing on gender inequality as a root cause of trafficking, in its prevention programming. The Council of Europe, through its Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, has published several reports on trafficking that have attracted media coverage and thus increased awareness of trafficking. The Spotlight Initiative supports the "Safe and fair" programme to prevent trafficking, which aims at empowering migrant women and ensuring safe and fair labour migration for women in the ASEAN region, including through the use of innovative technologies to disseminate information that can protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation, and improving their access to services.

42. The engagement with and regulation of the private sector, in particular with respect to labour standards, is essential for the elimination of labour exploitation and trafficking. Some countries have strengthened labour inspection procedures (Cambodia), improved government procurement policies to ensure compliance with labour standards (Canada), strengthened systems to ensure compliance with labour standards (New Zealand), introduced business transparency measures (United Kingdom), and focused on specific industries vulnerable to the use of forced labour (Denmark). IOM has produced guidelines regarding exploitation associated with supply chains.

43. Utilizing technology for prevention, including the use of technology to track and trace the activities of traffickers so as to detect potential victims of trafficking, is an emerging area. Canada, through its Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre, has identified indicators that can be used to assess financial transaction data to detect trafficking. Liechtenstein is using technology to analyse data and disrupt the financial flows associated with trafficking. Denmark is using digital platforms to conduct trials of new methods of identifying victims of trafficking.

44. Although efforts to address the root causes of trafficking remain limited overall, some developed countries have identified the need to improve socioeconomic conditions in countries of origin as a priority for eliminating trafficking through development cooperation, in particular in the areas of access to decent work and gender equality and the empowerment of women (Austria, Germany and United Kingdom). Very few countries have integrated their efforts to prevent trafficking within the broader aims of the Sustainable Development Goals of economic, social and environmental sustainable development, which are critical for addressing the factors that can contribute to creating a context conducive to the trafficking of women and girls.

C. Provision of services, with a focus on long-term recovery and prevention of revictimization

45. Women and girls who are victims of trafficking need various services to help them to recover from their abusive experience, ensure that they are not again exposed to violence and reintegrate back into their families in their home country or in a new country. Indeed, providing survivors with comprehensive and high-quality survivor-centered services is a key pillar of a human rights-based approach. In the short-term, survivors need medical, psychological, legal, immigration, social-protection and financial assistance and access to witness protection and shelters.

46. In the long-term, survivors need education and training, job placement, accommodation, health care, social support and reunification with their families and communities, where it is a safe option. It may not be appropriate in cases in which the family was involved in facilitating the trafficking or where the survivor may be at risk of revictimization in the home country. Almost half of identified cases of child trafficking began with a family member's involvement.[26] Survivors should be able to choose whether or not to return home, with due consideration given to their personal circumstances and safety, and viable immigration options and support should be made available to them.

47. Nearly all countries are providing some level of support to victims of trafficking. The more comprehensive approaches reported included a package of free services including accommodation, food, medical services, psychological support, legal aid and representation and translation services (Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia and New Zealand). In many cases, services are provided by, or in collaboration with, civil society organizations with expertise in supporting victims of trafficking in a gender-sensitive manner. Very few countries were able to provide data on the number of women who had benefitted from their services or the long-term social, economic and health outcomes for survivors of trafficking.

48. Victims of trafficking are often deterred from seeking support by the difficulty in navigating the complex systems and processes that are in place. Recognizing the need for a simplified support structure, some countries have introduced a centralized

[26] United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia*.

information and referral service, including through national telephone help lines (Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Peru and Tunisia). Taking advantage of technology to improve the reporting of trafficking, Indonesia has launched a smartphone application that provides information to Indonesian citizens who are planning to travel overseas or who are currently living abroad, including migrant workers. Some countries have also introduced measures to strengthen the quality of services, for example through introducing minimum standards for counselling (Cambodia) or standards for social services (Mali).

49. In line with the commitment to leave no one behind, Greece has support services that are targeted to specific migrant communities where trafficking has been detected, and Croatia has embedded the provision of support to victims of trafficking within social welfare services at the county level in order to increase their reach at the subnational level.

50. Increasing awareness among services providers is important for detecting those at risk of trafficking and providing a supportive response to those that have been trafficked. Countries have included training on the detection and response to trafficking for police officers, teachers, health service providers, labour inspectors and probation officers (Brunei Darussalam, El Salvador, Kenya, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Turkey). In addition, there is an increased recognition of the need to train transport providers to be able to detect victims of trafficking and traffickers. In that respect, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have produced new guidelines for training cabin crews on the identification of and response to trafficking in persons.

51. In addition to short-term measures, long-term measures help survivors to fully recover and reintegrate into their communities and reduce their chances of revictimization.[27] Whereas, until now, countries have focused primarily on the provision of short-term services, some countries are increasingly providing long-term care and support for reintegration. Denmark supports voluntary return and reintegration, including six months of assistance after a survivor's return to his or her home country. Latvia supports survivors of trafficking with a holistic social rehabilitation programme, including support for education, training and finding gainful employment.

52. A major challenge is that support services and visas (temporary and permanent) for survivors are often conditional, based on their cooperation with the criminal justice system. They are therefore often focused on short-term needs rather than long-term support, and survivors who choose not to go through the criminal justice process are denied support services to help them to recover. Temporary visas often restrict the ability of survivors of trafficking to work, which is essential for their recovery and reintegration and for reducing the risk of revictimization. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, has reiterated that assistance to victims of trafficking should be non-conditional and not based upon their willingness to cooperate with law enforcement or to participate in trials as witnesses.

53. A further challenge is the linking of service provision for survivors of trafficking to migration status. In some countries, the conditions of temporary visas may prevent survivors from gaining access to essential services that they need for their recovery. Even where victims of trafficking have the right to receive temporary residence and work permits, which allows them to gain access to services, the processes for

[27] Denise Brennan and Sine Plambech, "Editorial: moving forward — life after trafficking", *Anti-Trafficking Review*, No. 10 (2018).

obtaining permits are often lengthy and difficult to navigate, which impedes their gaining access to services.[28]

54. Several countries reported that they had made changes to the duration of the reflection and recovery period, ranging from 30 to 90 days, in which survivors of trafficking can gain access support while they make a decision regarding their cooperation with criminal investigation processes (Andorra, Denmark, Latvia and New Zealand). The immigration status of survivors of trafficking also varies across countries, with examples of good practices, such as the granting of temporary or permanent residence that is not contingent upon participation in processes of the criminal justice system (Canada and Denmark), or the establishment of a specific visa category for victims of trafficking (New Zealand).

55. The United Nations system also contributes to the care of victims of trafficking by supporting the provision of services. For example, UNICEF has supported the provision of shelter, information and support services for women and children who are victims of trafficking. Responding to the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking owing to a lack of identification, UNICEF has focused efforts on increasing birth registration among migrant and refugee populations in the Horn of Africa, West Africa and South-East Asia. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNODC are developing a module on human trafficking for a training programme for police personnel.

56. UNHCR has embedded strategies for responding to victims of trafficking within asylum seeking processes, such as in interviews and the application process. UN-Women supports victims of trafficking in several countries, including by providing access to legal information and supporting vocational skills training. It also builds the capacity of national authorities and service providers by providing guidelines on standards for service provision to survivors of trafficking. IOM has provided direct assistance to victims of trafficking, children in particular, deploying specialized multidisciplinary assistance teams to reduce traffickers' exploitation of vulnerability, while supporting positive coping strategies for victims. The United Nations voluntary trust funds on contemporary forms of slavery and for victims of trafficking in persons provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking, including through grants and capacity development projects. The United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women has supported the provision of support services to victims of trafficking, with a focus on members of marginalized groups.

D. Data and research

57. Understanding the full nature, extent and impact of trafficking requires the timely collection of high-quality, disaggregated data, which can inform the design and implementation of effective policies and programmes to address trafficking. Monitoring the impact of laws and policies and the evaluation of programmes and long-term outcomes for survivors are important for increasing knowledge of the most effective strategies for preventing and responding to trafficking.

58. Member States are focusing efforts on improving data on trafficking. Some countries have introduced annual reports on trafficking in order to provide information on the number and nature of trafficking cases and monitor trends over time (Canada, Chile, Jamaica, Kenya, Lithuania and Ukraine). There is a growing trend of appointing national rapporteurs who are responsible for reporting and monitoring the situation regarding trafficking (Jamaica and Lithuania). Only one

[28] Ibid.

country (Lithuania) reported on efforts to evaluate anti-trafficking programmes, highlighting monitoring and evaluation as an area requiring strengthening across all countries.

59. The efforts of international organizations such as UNODC, ILO and IOM notwithstanding, and the opportunity in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for improving measurement and monitoring trends,[29] the compilation of reliable data remains a challenge. On the one hand, measuring the total volume of trafficking in persons must account for the coexistence of its three defining elements: the act, the means and the purpose. On the other hand, victims of human trafficking should include both detected and undetected victims. The number of detected victims, as a result of investigation and prosecution activities of criminal justice system, is counted and reported by national law enforcement authorities. Methodology for estimating the number of undetected victims is still under development. Some methods have been identified, as highlighted in the recent report of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence Against Children of the Netherlands and UNODC,[30] but further testing is needed to produce and come to a consensus on a consolidated approach. The method for estimating undetected victims must allow for the estimation of victim characteristics (sex and age) and the forms of exploitation suffered.

60. United Nations entities have strengthened the knowledge base on trafficking through the collection of data and research undertaken to better understand and improve responses to trafficking, which includes supporting research on the effectiveness of responses to trafficking (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute), developing methodologies and indicators to improve the protection of child victims of trafficking (UNICEF), conducting research on the links between trafficking and terrorism (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate) and producing regular data to understand trends in the profiles of victims of trafficking (IOM and UNODC), understand recurring evidential issues in the prosecution of trafficking cases (UNODC), map and analyse the gaps in addressing the gender dimensions of trafficking (UN-Women) and support the development of accessible and easily employable tools that practitioners can use to put sectoral learning to work and improve their counter-trafficking programmes (Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons). WHO is compiling evidence on the role that health services can play in both detecting victims and supporting their health needs. OHCHR also monitors the jurisprudence of human rights mechanisms.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

61. Trafficking in persons is a crime and a human rights violation that remains deeply gendered in its manifestation and impact. Trafficking in women and girls is addressed in the 2030 Agenda as a form of violence against women and girls that must be eliminated in order to achieve sustainable development that leaves no one behind

[29] See indicator 16.2.2 (Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation) of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[30] National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence Against Children of the Netherlands and UNODC, "Monitoring target 16.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: a multiple systems estimation of the numbers of presumed human trafficking victims in the Netherlands in 2010–2015, by year, age, gender, form of exploitation and nationality", research brief (September 2017).

and must be pursued in a comprehensive and integrated manner across several Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

62. States continued to adopt or strengthen laws and policies on preventing and responding to trafficking in women and girls, often with measures targeted to women and girls from marginalized groups. In some cases, such laws were aligned with other relevant legislation including labour and immigration laws. That progress notwithstanding, enforcement of legislation remains weak and investigation, prosecution and conviction rates remain very low.

63. Although the number of programmes in place for tackling trafficking is growing, it is not always evident how many of these programmes reflect a gender equality perspective and a human rights-based approach. Little information was provided on the monitoring and evaluation of programmes to understand their impact and which approaches are most effective in preventing and responding to trafficking, specifically trafficking in women and girls. Given that efforts to prevent trafficking mainly focus on awareness-raising and information-sharing, more emphasis is needed on tackling the root causes of trafficking and on preventing trafficking as an integral part of countries' broader implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. While States have increasingly recognized the need to support survivors of trafficking, most responses to trafficking in women and girls still focus on the delivery of short-term services that are often contingent upon victims' cooperation with processes of the criminal justice system. Efforts to ensure the long-term reintegration and support of survivors are still limited.

65. States reported information on several initiatives aimed at improving data on trafficking, yet efforts must focus more on collecting information on undetected victims and on improving the quality and availability of such data, including for women and girls from marginalized groups, through the development of internationally agreed standards and methodologies.

66. Rapid technological change is shifting the landscape of prevention of and responses to trafficking. More research is required to understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of technology in relation to trafficking, so as to help to inform technological development and ensure that technological responses to trafficking respect data protection, privacy and ethical standards.

B. Recommendations

67. **Achieving gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the realization of their human rights must be at the core of all international policy commitments, as the cornerstone for addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking.**

68. **States should ensure that measures for the prevention of and in response to trafficking fully and explicitly address the gendered nature of the crime. They should, in particular, address the specific needs of women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual exploitation, forced marriage and domestic servitude. Responses should also address discrimination on the basis of gender and gender inequality as root causes of trafficking. In order to leave no one behind, measures must respond to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that increase the vulnerability of the most marginalized groups of women and girls.**

69. **States should ensure that specific laws that criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, are in place in accordance with the standards set by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Those laws must be fully**

implemented and enforced, to ensure that all victims of trafficking have access to justice, that perpetrators are prosecuted and held accountable for all their crimes and that criminal proceeds are seized or confiscated.

70. States should ensure coherence between the laws on and measures responding to migration, labour and trafficking. Such laws and measures should be based on human rights principles and must be gender-sensitive, to ensure that the human rights of migrant women and girls, including migrant women workers, are protected throughout the migration and employment process and to provide effective protection against trafficking. Efforts to prevent trafficking should not result in more restrictive migration policies, which would render women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking. States should ensure that workplaces are regulated so that labour standards adhere to international standards and should introduce measures to monitor compliance, with attention to potential victims of trafficking.

71. States should adopt prevention measures beyond awareness-raising, to address the root causes that make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking and to reduce demand for trafficking. Those efforts must aim at addressing, inter alia, violence against women and the culture of tolerance towards such violence, the vulnerability of women and girls to poverty, access for women to decent work and access for women and girls to education. Such efforts to prevent trafficking should be embedded in States' broader implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

72. States should ensure that victims of trafficking receive comprehensive and long-term protection and support, including high-quality services, to enable them to reintegrate into society and lead fulfilling lives with dignity and respect. Long-term reintegration and rehabilitation support should not be contingent upon their cooperation in the judicial process or their immigration status. It should include, at a minimum, support income-generating activities, training, financial compensation and psychosocial rehabilitation. States should grant legal residency status during the period of rehabilitation and ensure return and reunification, only if in accordance with the survivor's choice and best interests and when long-term rehabilitation and integration support are available. Survivors who do not wish to return to their countries, owing to risk of re-trafficking or fear of retribution, should be granted viable alternatives, such as work permits or special residency status. In the case of repatriation, effective procedures and monitoring should be implemented to prevent re-victimization.

73. States, together with technology providers and relevant United Nations entities, should further examine the opportunities of technology for enhancing efforts to prevent and respond to the trafficking of women and girls. States should undertake further research into the opportunities and risks presented by technological advances, and the gender dimensions thereof, for the prevention and response to trafficking with a focus on data protection, privacy and ethical standards. Greater efforts should also be made to prevent the use of technology and, in particular, the Internet and social media, for trafficking.

74. The United Nations system and other concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should cooperate with Governments, with a view to improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex and age to help to elucidate the gender dimensions of trafficking, especially regarding the various forms of exploitation. Further research should also be undertaken with regard to forms of trafficking that are not sufficiently explored within the context of trafficking, such as forced marriages and sham marriages.

75. **The United Nations system should continue to support national efforts to address trafficking in women and girls in a coordinated way to ensure effective implementation and evaluation in a manner that provides positive outcomes for women and girls.**